

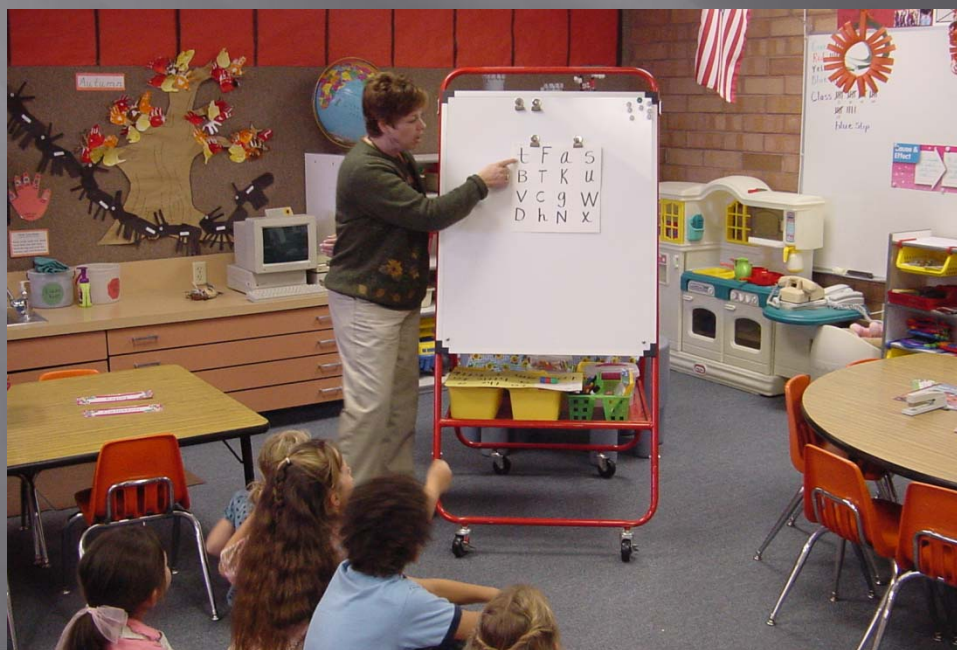
KNOWING LETTER NAMES:

A Strong Predictor of Future Reading and
Writing Success for Young Children

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Montana Office of Public Instruction

August 12, 2008





Letter Naming – Research



- Letter naming is a **strong predictor** (along with phonological awareness) of phonics acquisition and reading fluency (Evans, Bell, Shaw, Moretti, & Page, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000; Treiman, weatherston, & Berch, 1994; Stage, Shepard, Davidson, & Browning, 2001).



Learning Letters Names

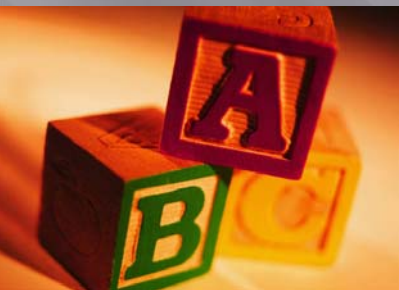
Breaking the Letter a Week Tradition

- Teaching a letter a week in Kindergarten is a long standing tradition. But the real question is this – “Is it effective to teach a letter a week?”
 - Letter a week must be effective to some degree otherwise teachers would abandon the practice.
 - Massed vs. Distributed Review and Practice



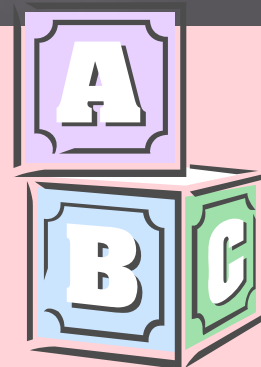
Learning Letters Names

- ▣ **The Law of 10-20 for Memory Sets**
 - This law discovered by Hal Pashler (2006) has been tested for a wide range of memory set items such as letters, names of state capitol cities, historical dates, arithmetic times tables, etc.
 - The optimal review cycle for a set is 10 to 20 percent of the time you want children to remember the items in the set.



Learning Letters Names

- ▣ **The Law of 10-20 for Memory Sets**
 - Example: You want children to learn all 26 letters and remember them for at least six months (this is the longest period this law has been tested). How long is six months? 182.5 days. What is 10-20 percent of 182.5 days? It is 18.5 to 37 days. This is the optimal review cycle for the memory set.



Learning Letters Names

- ▣ **The Law of 10-20 for Memory Sets**
 - So, if we are to review the memory set every 18-37 days, we must teach the entire memory set within that time frame. So why not teach “A Letter A Day” since this would fall near the mid point of the 18-37 day range - 26 days. What do we teach? We explicitly and briefly teach the name, the sound, and the upper/low case forms of writing the letter.



Learning Letters Names

An Action Research Project on the “Letter a Day” Approach

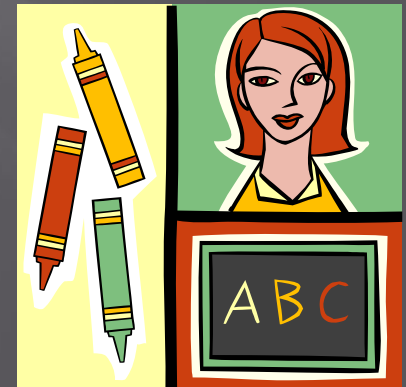
- ▣ 4 schools in a Reading First School District matched on Demographics and Achievement levels
 - 95-100 % poverty
 - 75% second language learners
 - Inner city setting
 - 95% diversity
 - Low achieving



Learning Letters Names

An Action Research Project on the “Letter a Day” Approach

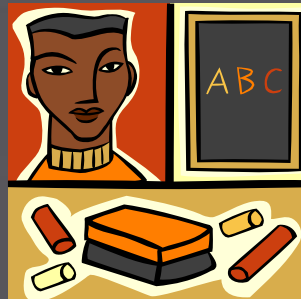
- ▣ 3 schools changed to a letter a day format including lowest school of the 4
- ▣ 1 school remained unchanged with a letter a week
- ▣ Results after a year?



Learning Letters Names

An Action Research Project on the “Letter a Day” Approach

- ▣ Letter Naming Fluency Test (DIBELS) at end of year.
 - 3 schools using a letter a day
 - ▣ Percentage of kindergarten students at benchmark 88%-97%.
 - 1 school using letter a week
 - ▣ Percentage of students at benchmark 44%.





Letter Naming – Research



- Learning letter names follows similar patterns across languages (Treiman, Levin, & Kessler, 2007).



Letter Naming - Research



- ▣ Knowing letter names accurately and fluently explain significant amounts of variance in later reading ability (Richey, 2004; Richey & Speece, 2006).
- ▣ **Writing** manuscript letters is an important part of learning letter names and in preventing later writing disabilities in young children (Schlagel, 2007).

Letter Naming - Research



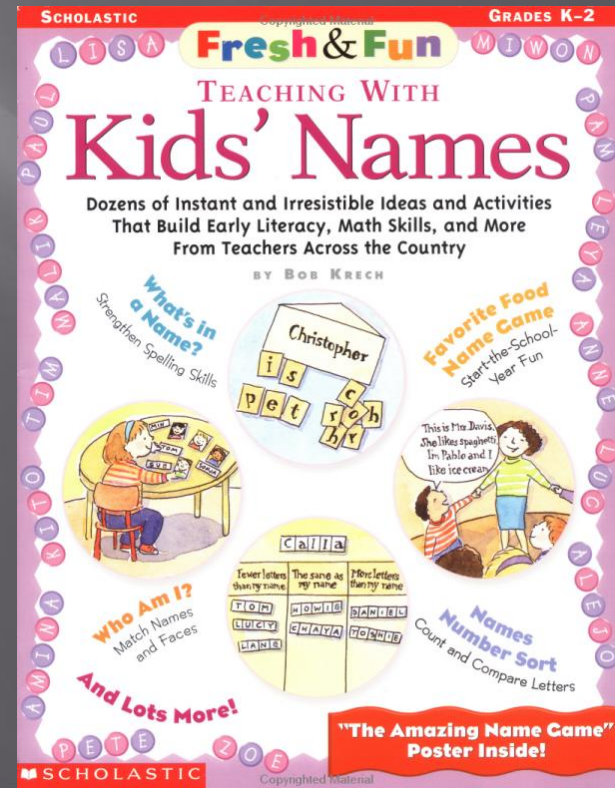
- ▣ Knowing letter **names** is a better predictor of later reading than knowing letter **sounds** because learning letter names helps children acquire letter sounds since many letter names contain the letter sounds (Share, 2004; Treiman, Tincoff, Rodriguez, Mousaki, & Francis, 1998).

Letter Naming – Teaching and Learning

- ▣ Research has shown that learning letter names can be facilitated in a variety of ways (Justice, Pence, Bowles & Wiggins, 2006):
 - **Letters that occur in children's names**
 - **Alphabetic order**
 - **Letter pronunciation effect** (where the sound of the letter is also in the name)
 - **Letter frequency effects** (letters that occur most frequently in written language)
 - **Explicit handwriting instruction and guided practice of correct manuscript letter formation using correct models**

Learning Letter Names

- ▣ Research has shown that learning letter names can be facilitated in a variety of ways (Justice, Pence, Bowles & Wiggins, 2006):
 - **Letters that occur in children's names** (Krech, 2000)



Learning Letters Names



▣ Using Children's Names

■ Jump Rope Rhymes

- ▣ My name is ____ (Cammie)_____.
- ▣ And my friend's name is ____ (Annie)_____.
- ▣ We come from ____ (Alabamie)_____.
- ▣ And we sell ____ (Chocolate Candy)_____.

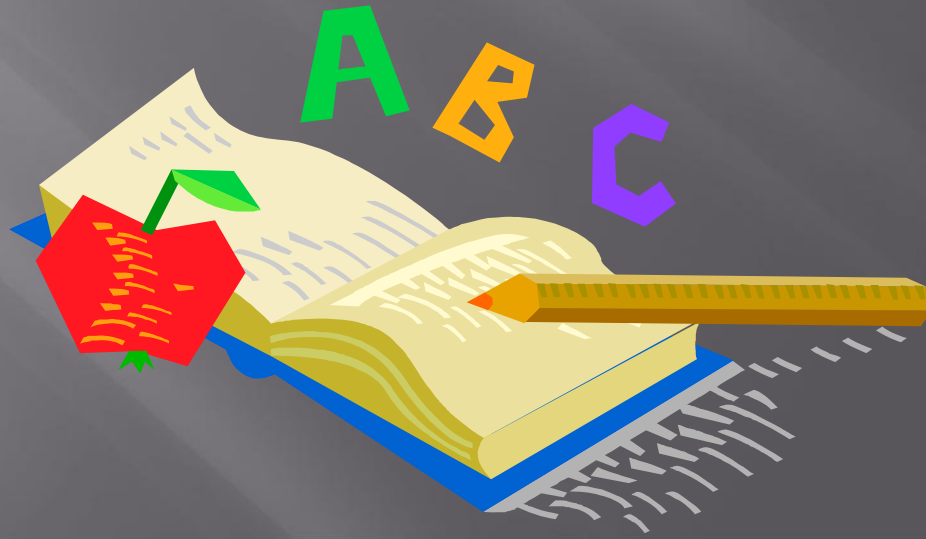
■ Class Names Bingo

■ Chants

- ▣ Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?
- ▣ __ (Jamal)_____ stole the cookies from the jar. Who me?
Yes you! Couldn't be! Then who stole the cookies from the
cookie jar?

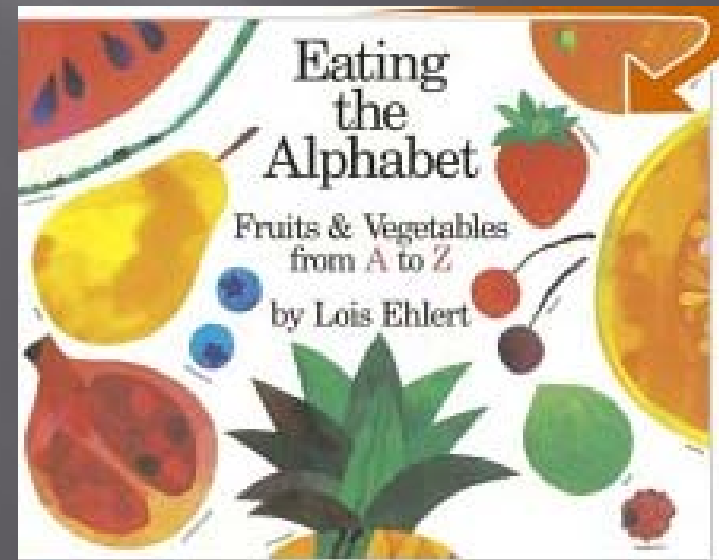
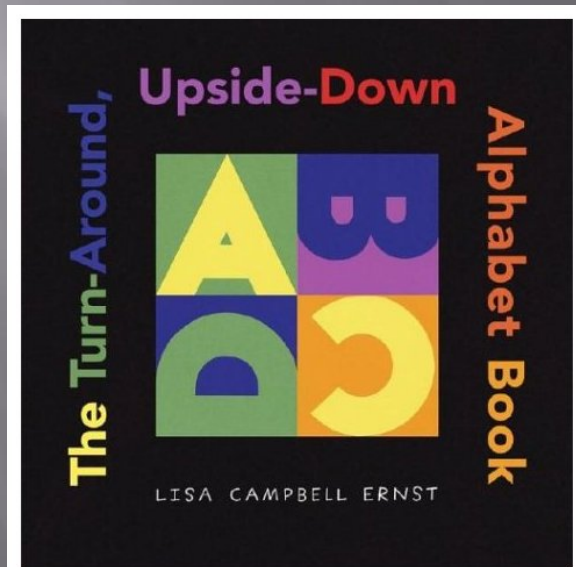
Letter Naming - Teaching and Learning

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 - *Alphabetic order*



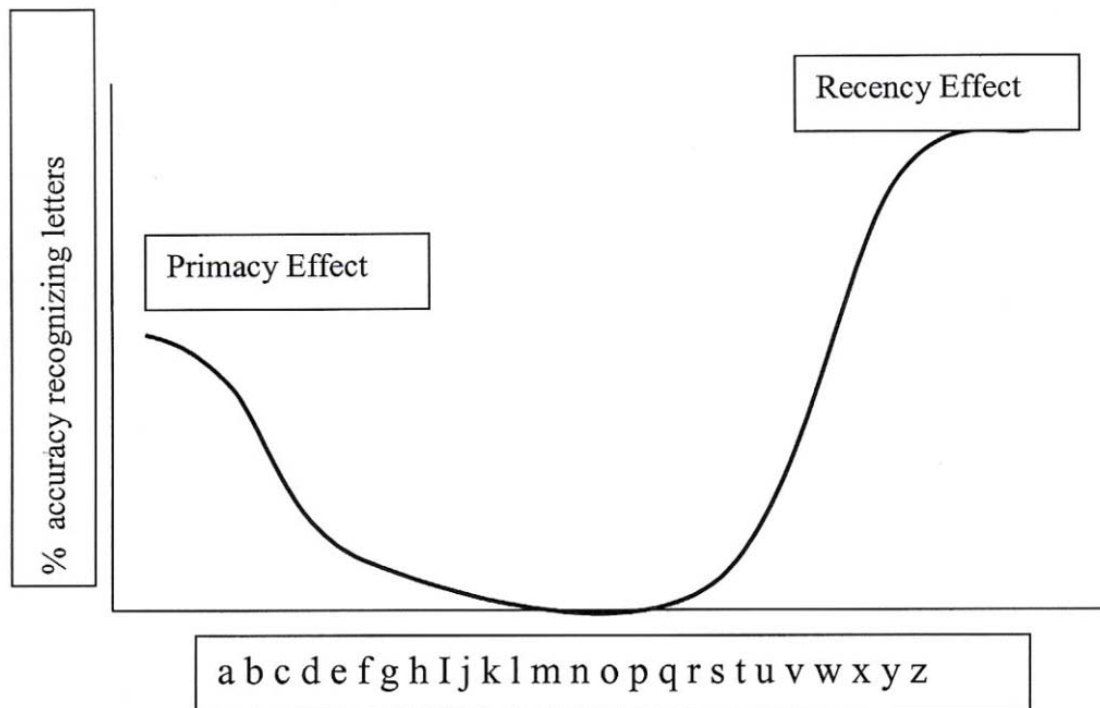
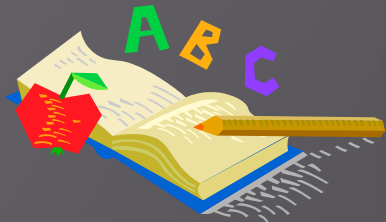
Learning Letters Names

- ▣ Using Alphabetic Order and Read Aloud
 - Reading aloud alphabet books and discussing letters (Brabham, Murray, and Bowden, 2006).
 - Singing and writing alphabet songs can be used to support children's learning of letter names (Smith, 2000).



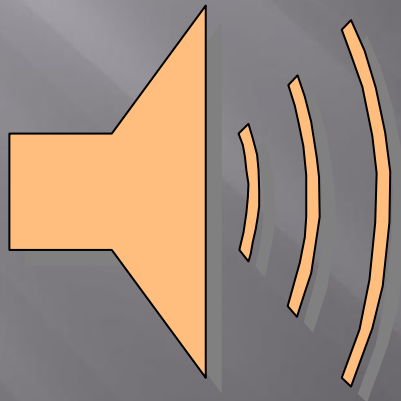
Letter Naming - Teaching and Learning

- *Teaching the Alphabet as a serial list in order can lead to “list learning effects” as shown by the bowed serial position curve below:*



Letter Naming - Teaching and Learning

- ▣ Research has shown that learning letter names can be facilitated in a variety of ways (Justice, Pence, Bowles & Wiggins, 2006):
- ▣ **Letter pronunciation effect** (where the sound of the letter is also in the name)

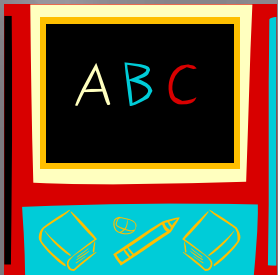


in **Name**

Learning Letters Names

▣ Naming the Letters

- Saying the names of letters not only reinforces the names of letters but also many of the sounds (except g (hard g sound), h, w & y):
 - ▣ Vowels – a, e, i, o, & u
 - ▣ Consonants – b, c, d, f, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, x, z
 - ▣ Letters where the sound of the letter is at the beginning of the letter names are learned easiest, then at the end of the letter names, and then not in the letter names (Treiman, et al., 1994; 1997; 1998; 2003).



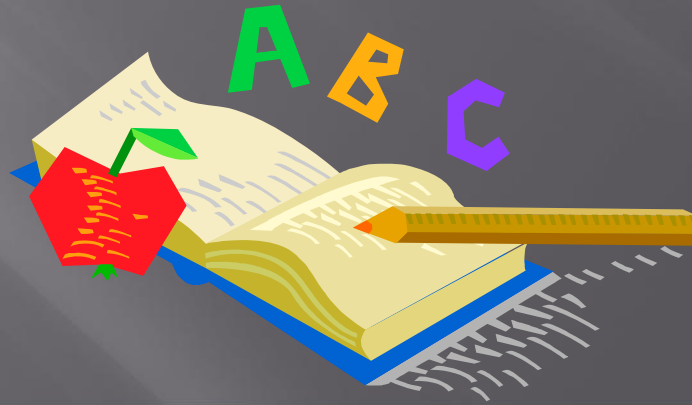
Letter Naming - Teaching and Learning

- ▣ Research has shown that learning letter names can be facilitated in a variety of ways (Justice, Pence, Bowles & Wiggins, 2006):
 - ▣ **Letter frequency effect** (where the sound of the letter is also in the name)



Learning Letters Names

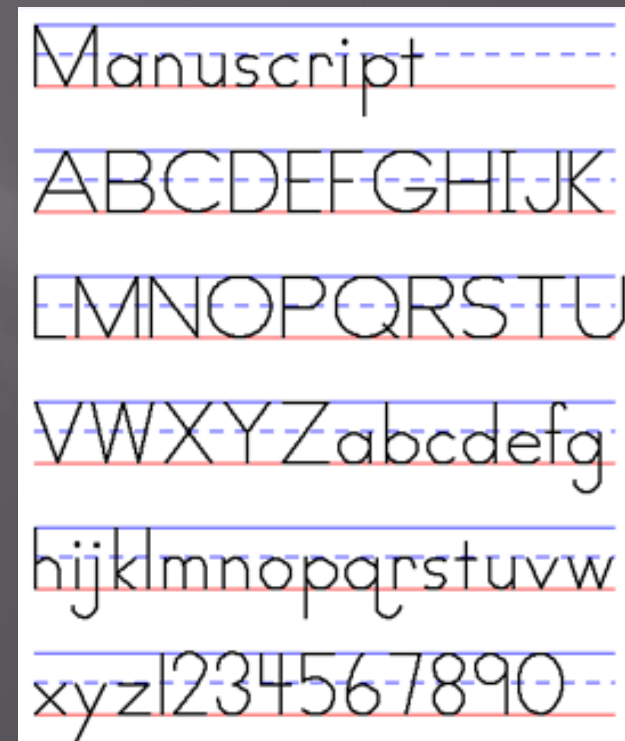
- ▣ **Using Letter Frequency (Fry, 2004)**
 - Consonants in order of frequency:
r, t, n, s, l, c, d, p, m, b, f, v, g, h, k, w, th, sh, ng, ch, x, z, j, qu, wh, y
 - Vowels in order of frequency:
Short i, a, e, schwa, long o & e, short u & o, long a, u, & i, r controlled a & o, ou, oo, oi, air, ar



Letter Naming - Teaching and Learning

- Research has shown that learning letter names can be facilitated in a variety of ways (Justice, Pence, Bowles & Wiggins, 2006):

- Writing the letters using a model of standard letter formation.**



Learning Letters Names

▣ Writing the Letters

- Explicit teaching and guided practice of letter forms facilitates writing and letter naming fluency (Graham, Harris & Fink, 2000; Schlagal, 2007).

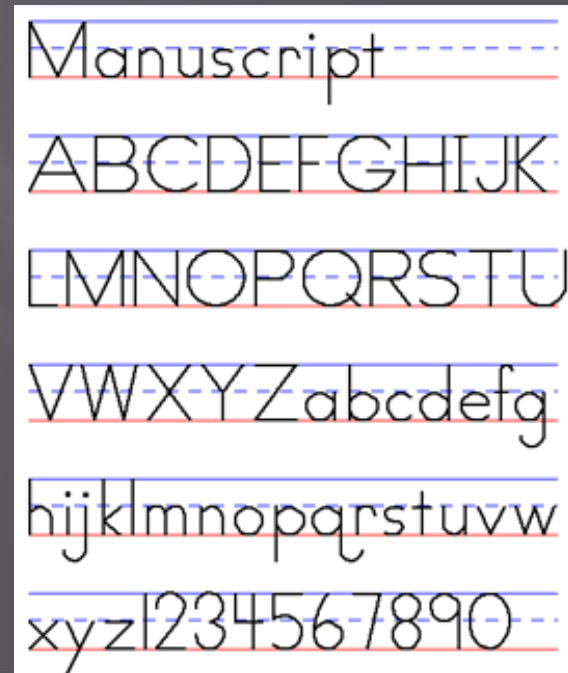
- ▣ **Short daily practice sessions are most effective**



Learning Letters Names

▣ Writing the Letters

- Explicit teaching and guided practice of letter forms facilitates writing and letter naming fluency (Graham, Harris & Fink, 2000; Schlagal, 2007).
- **Teacher demonstrations of how to form a letter while describing how it is formed is best for younger children.**

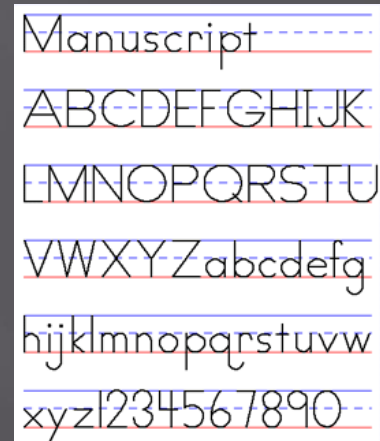


Learning Letters Names

▣ Writing the Letters

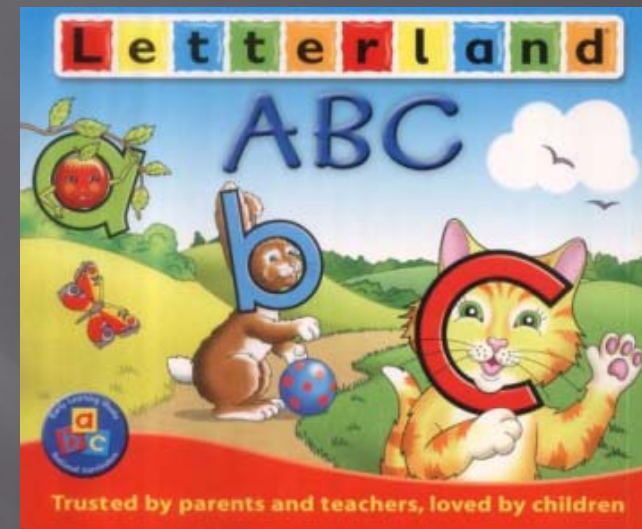
- Explicit teaching and guided practice of letter forms facilitates writing and letter naming fluency (Graham, Harris & Fink, 2000; Schlagal, 2007).

- ▣ **Copying or tracing a letter from a correct model is helpful for children's practice. When doing this children should use a "look, say, cover, write, check" technique.**



Learning Letters Names

- ▣ **Writing the Letters**
 - Explicit teaching and guided practice of letter forms facilitates writing and letter naming fluency (Graham, Harris & Fink, 2000; Schlagal, 2007).
 - ▣ **Using pictographs in story or song-based instruction for introducing letters such as is found in the British Letterland approach is helpful.**



Letter Naming – Teaching and Learning

- ▣ **Writing letters using explicit instruction, guided practice, dictation, shared and interactive writing (Stachoviak, 1996; McCarrier, Fountas, & Pinnell, 2000).**



Learning Letters Names



- ▣ **Shared Writing (Language Experience Approach)**
 1. Students participate in a common experience.
 2. Teacher and students discuss the common experience.
 3. Students dictate sentences for the charts and the teacher takes the dictation.
 4. Teacher and students share in reading the chart with each new sentence added.
 5. The chart is used to learn about letters that are used to make words that we say.



Learning Letters Names

▣ Interactive Writing

Conducting an Interactive Writing Lesson.

There is no one correct way to teach an interactive writing lesson, but based on the writings of McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas (1999), I recommend the following :

1. In the early stages of writing, the teacher helps students compose a simple message taken from reading books aloud or from some other group experience. For example, consider this line from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1981): “On Monday, he ate through one apple.”

The teacher may ask students to replace old words with new words. A child might offer the following innovation on the text: “On Monday, he ate through one tomato.”

Learning Letters Names



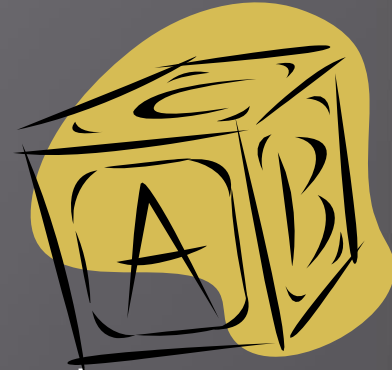
▣ Interactive Writing Continued

2. Teacher and students share the pen as the message is written word by word. When new words are added to a line of text, the children reread the line up to the added word. In the earliest stages of writing development, the teacher may write the word for students. With time and development, the teacher shares the pen, inviting children to contribute a letter, several letters, or an entire word.

**Write (On) Read (On), Write (Monday) Read (On Monday)
Write (he) Read (On Monday, he) Write (ate)....**

3. Where appropriate, the teacher encourages the child to stretch the word and say it slowly to predict the letters by analyzing the sounds. Children may attempt any letter in the word in any order. Working within the child's zone of proximal development as suggested by Vygotsky (1962), the teacher fills in those letters that the child is unable to analyze on his own.

Learning Letters Names



▣ Interactive Writing Continued

4. The teacher should construct a word wall that is used as a writing resource for students. Words can be listed on the wall as “Words We Know and Can Write,” “Words We Almost Know,” and “Words We Need to Analyze and Write with Help.”
5. As teachers and children write interactively, the teacher helps children learn directionality, punctuation, spaces, features of print, and capitalization. In this fashion, children learn the mechanics and the authoring processes necessary to produce high-quality writing products. Interactive writing sessions typically last from 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the nature of the text to be produced. The goal of interactive writing is neat, legible, and sensible text.

Learning Letters Names

▣ Letter Dictation

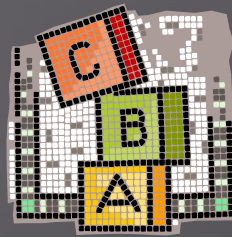
- Supplies needed: Markers, pencils, or other writing supplies, gel boards, white boards, kleenslates, etc. for choral response or lined/numbered paper.
- Stop watch or wrist watch with second hand.
- Dictate random letters using upper and lower case. Begin slowly about 10 seconds per letter. Increase speed during the year.

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Learning Letters Names

- ▣ **Searching for Letters in Print**
 - Playing “I Spy with My Little Eye”
 - ▣ Supplies needed – several copies of a simple children’s book, washable ink pens, clear transparencies, sponge and paper towels.
 - ▣ Open the book and place the transparency over a page or two. Say, “I spy with my little eye the letter ____.” Fill in the blank with the name of letter that occurs several times on that page or pages. To increase the challenge use a timer to see how many you can see in a time period.



Learning Letters Names

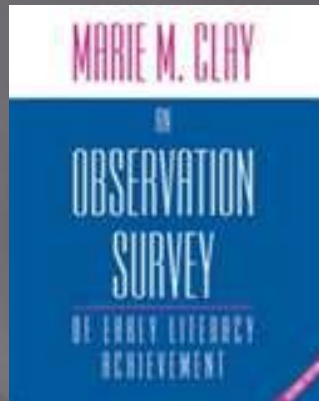
Letter Naming Fluency is Important

- Whether recognizing, naming, searching for, or writing dictated letters, accuracy as well as speed (more fluent) is important.
- Using a timer or a stop watch turns any of these activities into a “beat the clock” game. Children love to see how many more letters they can say, recognize, find, or write.



Learning Letters Names

- ▣ Assessing Letter Name Knowledge
 - Letter Naming Test from the **Observation Survey** by Marie Clay (2002) shows correlations between this test and early reading achievement of .83 for predictive validity and .85 correlation with word reading ability and a .97 split half reliability (Denton, Ciancio, & Fletcher, 2006). Best used for determining if students meet benchmarks and not for fine grained progress monitoring.



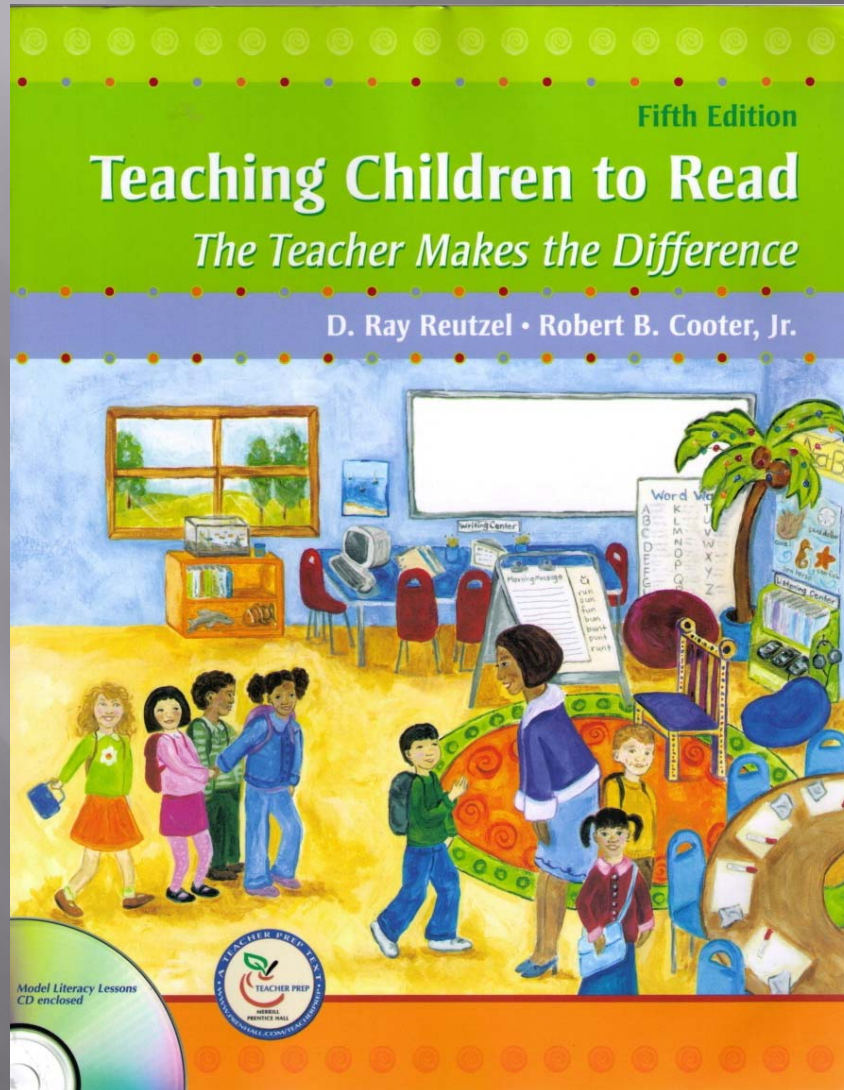
Learning Letters Names



- ▣ Assessing Letter Name Knowledge
 - **Letter Naming Fluency** Test from the Dynamic Assessment of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The median criterion-related validity of LNF with the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised readiness cluster standard score is .70 in kindergarten. The predictive validity of kindergarten LNF with first-grade Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised Reading Cluster standard score is .65 and .71 with first-grade CBM reading. Scored by number of letters named in one minute. Available at <http://dibels.uoregon.edu/measures/lmf.php>.



For More Information



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